



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

# News Release

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## **Fugitive sex offender apprehended in Australia** *ICE investigation leads to multiple indictments*

PHOENIX – A convicted sex offender who fled the United States while under investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has been arrested by the Australian Federal Police and is now awaiting extradition.

Howard Wesley Cotterman, 66, of Truckee, Calif., was indicted by a federal grand jury in Tucson, Ariz. in June 2007 on eight counts. Those counts relate to the production, transportation, receipt, and possession of child pornography, as well as the importation and transportation of obscene materials, in addition to flight to avoid prosecution. That indictment also contains a forfeiture allegation.

“This case is yet another example of the extraordinary law enforcement work that is being done to protect the most vulnerable among us,” said Alonzo Peña, special agent in charge of the ICE office of investigation in Arizona. “We are putting pedophiles on notice that ICE and its law enforcement partners here and abroad stand ready to pursue and prosecute those who sexually exploit children.”

Daniel G. Knauss, U.S. Attorney in the District of Arizona, stated that “Creating child pornography, and the market that follows, is a horrible crime which affects innocent victims at the time it’s created and for years afterward because of its distribution. We appreciate the persistence of our law enforcement partners around the world for helping stop this cycle of violence against innocent children.”

According to the criminal complaint, ICE agents were alerted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspectors at the port of entry in Lukeville, Ariz., when Cotterman and his wife were returning from Mexico. ICE agents interviewed Cotterman, the subject of a law enforcement lookout. They subsequently released the couple from the port of entry, and seized two laptop computers and digital cameras/camcorders that were in his possession.

While an ICE computer forensics agent completed an examination of his laptop, Cotterman fled the country and traveled to the Sydney, Australia area. The computer forensics examination revealed that Cotterman had numerous password-protected files hidden on his computer containing homemade child pornography involving a minor female.

After Cotterman fled, ICE’s attaché in Singapore sought assistance from Australian authorities to locate and arrest him so that he could be returned to the United States to stand trial. On September 8, Australian police arrested Cotterman in Coffs Harbour, New South Wales. He was found to be in possession of a fake U.S. passport, multiple fraudulent drivers’ licenses, and \$14,000 in U.S. and Australian currency.

An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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